

V. RECREATION

A. GOALS

The overall goals for recreation within the Hatcher Pass management unit are to:

1. Continue to provide a broad spectrum of dispersed recreational opportunities as the highest priority for recreation management. Provide a variety of recreational experiences including developed facilities at select sites near the road system, and trail-related, and wilderness-type experiences.
2. Designate some routes or areas for specific types of use. Provide public recreational facilities and parking.
3. Provide opportunities at select locations for private sector commercial and non-profit recreation facilities, the growth of tourism, and for recreation industry contribution to employment and local and state economic development.
4. Maintain the high scenic values and historical resources.
5. Improve public safety and reduce conflicts in use.

B. MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The entire Hatcher Pass Management Unit will be managed with recreation as a primary use. Throughout most of the unit, dispersed recreational activities such as hunting, trapping, fishing, skiing, snowmachining, or hiking will be the main management emphasis. In order to preserve the opportunity for dispersed recreation in a scenic, natural setting on state land, commercial recreational development will generally be focused in two areas: Independence Valley within Independence Mine State Historic Park and the potential Government Peak alpine ski area/four-season resort, with smaller developments allowed north of the junction of the Hatcher Pass Road and Gold Mint Road (see Map 12 in original plan), at two locations in the Hillside Subunit and at [ONE LOCATION ALONG] Willow Creek. If there is additional demand for private sector development, the use of the 3,170 acres of private land within the management unit is encouraged. A large portion of the management unit (particularly Willow Mountain and Little Susitna subunits) will be managed as undeveloped open space.

Simultaneously with development of this plan, the legislature determined what it considered to be the most appropriate way to protect the Little Susitna River corridor. The result was the passage of SB 334 (see Appendix XIV), sponsored by Senator Kerttula, which established the Little Susitna River corridor as the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area. The legislation provides long-term protection to the Little Susitna corridor, closes it to new mineral entry and land sales, and states that it will be managed to:

- a. provide for public recreation activities;
- b. protect and enhance the fishery, waterfowl, and wildlife resources and habitat; and provide for public use of the fishery and wildlife resources, including fishing, grazing, hunting, and trapping;
- c. protect the water quality and scenic resources within the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area.

Since the Legislature has thus indicated that a Public Use Area is the type of designation it finds appropriate for this area at this time, the plan recommends that part of the management unit (about 4,232 acres) be added to the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area rather than designated as a State Recreation Area as proposed in the draft plan. The proposed additions to the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area are the Reed Lakes corridor; Hatcher Pass Road corridor between Archangel turn-off and Hatcher Pass; and the Mint Glacier area. DNR recognizes public support for the state park system designations and in the long term it may be that a State Recreation Area is what is demanded here, based on heavy public use, the need for facilities, and the need for active management to minimize hazardous recreation activity in the road and avalanche paths, and for general on-the-ground regulation enforcement.

The purposes stated in the legislation that created the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area are essentially the same as those proposed in the draft plan for these high recreational use areas. The legislation provides that the plan will delineate how these uses will be managed. The plan adds wildlife viewing as a purpose. Grazing in areas of good grassland, hunting and trapping, and mining on existing claims will continue within the Public Use Area. (The Mint Glacier area is to remain open to mineral entry.)

In addition, two areas will be transferred to the Division of Parks under an Interagency Land Management Agreement for management of the intensive recreational use expected to occur there. A 360-acre site in the Hatcher Pass and Summit Lake area will be developed as a scenic viewpoint with parking, trails, and a picnic area. Five hundred and thirty acres on the east side of the Independence Valley floor will be added to the Independence Mine State Historic Park to provide management for intensive year-round trail and visitor use and incorporate historic sites not now within the park.

Public facilities proposed for the management unit (funding permitting) include three campgrounds: on the Little Susitna River, in Craigie Creek Valley, and on Willow Creek; a picnic site on each side of the pass, parking, trailhead and trail development (see Map 12 in original plan), and a limited number of public use cabins in the northwestern portion of the management area.

A diversity of recreational experiences will be maintained by designating some trails or areas for certain uses and by creating new access points to disperse use. The separation of incompatible uses will increase enjoyment and safety by the broadest cross section of users. Extensive user-group involvement has been utilized in determining areas to be designated for motorized or non-motorized designations. Management of these areas will

largely be by user-group participation in trail development, voluntary compliance, and through use of signs.

A coalition of outdoor groups submitted a proposal for the addition of the glacial "high peaks" area to the management unit, and the designation of it and part of the original management unit as a non-motorized primitive area. This addition received strong support at the public meetings. Parts of this proposal are incorporated in this plan, such as inclusion of Snowbird Glacier and designating non-motorized areas; however, all of the proposals could not be accommodated at this time. The proposal is described in Appendix IX and DNR's response is explained.

The most important elements in providing a quality recreational experience are the maintenance of the environmental and scenic qualities of the area and its diverse wildlife habitats and fish and wildlife populations. Guidelines for the maintenance of these important public values are incorporated into the resource use, road development, and facilities sections of this plan.

A final element of the recreation management strategy is to support tourism as a use of the area. The same special environmental values and public facilities which add to enjoyment of the area by residents enhance the area's attractiveness to the tourism industry.

C. GUIDELINES

1. PUBLIC FACILITY DEVELOPMENT

a. **Location of Facilities and Visual Qualities.** The Management Strategy section above generally describes the intended location of proposed public facilities. Other factors to be considered prior to location of public facilities are avalanche hazard and traffic circulation. (More detail is given in Chapter 4.) Specific sites should be carefully selected to harmonize with the natural setting and to screen users from traffic or adjacent uses. It is especially important that facilities visible from the road and located within a quarter mile of the road will be encouraged to harmonize with the natural setting. The scale of a facility should be appropriate to its setting so as not to visually overwhelm the natural setting.

b. **Picnic and Campsites.** Picnic areas and campsites will be located off the road in areas out of view of the road where possible. A spur road with suitable signs will direct the traveler to the site and protect the scenic quality.

c. **Parking Areas.** Parking areas will be located out of view of the roadway where possible. Trees or contours (either natural or artificial) should be used for screening. Use of boulders or planted vegetation may be appropriate at some sites.

d. **Signs.** Establish a uniform sign system which is compatible with and complementary to the character of the area. Signs will be used in a judicious manner so as not to clutter the roadside.

e. **Construction Materials.** Construction materials that blend into the environment or reflect the area's historic character will be used.

f. **Development Associated with Facilities.** Development associated with public facilities, e.g., utilities, parking areas, sidewalks, and lighting should be coordinated with those of other users in the area. These developments should be safe, compact, simple in line and shape, not disruptive of ecological cycles, and of a color that blends into the surrounding terrain.

g. **Utilities.** Utilities shall be placed underground. If that is not possible at specific sites, the type of poles or structures will be selected for minimizing visual disturbance and will be screened from view. Variances must be approved by the Division of Land and Water Management and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation. See Transportation Guideline 3 on utility lines on page 159 of original plan.

2. COMMERCIAL AND NON-COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

a. Authorization Criteria.

(1) **Scale of Development and Suitability.** Large-scale commercial recreational developments are not permitted on state land in most portions of Hatcher Pass. (See Management Strategy above and Chapter 4 for exceptions.) The state has no restrictions upon commercial recreational developments on private lands. Permit or lease applications for the use of the public lands for commercial or other private sector recreational purposes will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and require interagency review and approval. Permits or leases will be issued only if they are consistent with the management intent for the subunit in which they are to be located and will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on other uses, wildlife and scenic values, and if they provide a clear public benefit.

(2) **Relationship to Public Use.** Private sector developments must enhance public enjoyment of the area.

(3) **Cumulative Impact.** Public input throughout the planning process clearly indicated that most people prefer that care be taken not to overdevelop the area. A sense of overcrowding could easily occur since most of the area is wide open alpine tundra, and on the east side, access is limited to narrow valleys. To meet this public concern, land managers will evaluate the cumulative impact of land use authorizations as a major criteria for determining whether or not further authorizations should be issued.

(4) **Private Sector Role.** Private sector development and management of recreation facilities will be encouraged where specialized capabilities of the private sector are especially well suited for provision of high quality, safe recreation opportunities.

(5) **Avalanche Safety Plan Required.** An avalanche safety plan will be required as outlined in the Snow Avalanche Safety Program Section of this chapter as necessary or appropriate.

(6) **Development Plan Required.** Design concept proposals will be submitted for screening and approval by the Division of Land and Water Management and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation within DNR and ADF&G prior to commencement of development. The design plan must be specific on terrain alteration, people flow, siting of facilities, access, utilities, parking and signs, and type of materials to be used. It will detail how the guidelines given in Number 2, above, are to be followed.

b. **Viewshed Guidelines.**

(1) **Guidelines For Public Facilities Apply.** Guidelines for public facilities given in Guideline 1, a through e, above, also apply to private sector developments authorized on state land.

(2) **Management of Visual Changes.** Authorizations of private sector developments on state land within the management area will create changes in land use and visual qualities of the management area. The goal is to maintain the integrity of the overall natural landscape through regulation of structures, materials, colors, utilities, access, etc. The prescription for management of visual change is outlined below.

(a) **Signs.** Continuity in type of sign material and design is required. Signs will be under 10 feet in height and will complement the natural setting. Natural materials such as stone or wood are preferred. Signs adjacent to the roadway will be limited to a single directional sign. Sign types and locations must be approved prior to construction by the Division of Land and Water Management and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation.

(b) **Utilities.** (See Guideline 3 on page 159 in original plan).

(c) **Structures.** Structures will minimize disharmonious elements by using natural elements in their siting and design, or by reflecting the historic mining character of the area.

(d) **Siting.** Sensitive areas within the site will be identified. With the exception of ski lifts, structures will not be located on visually prominent points. Lift towers will have non-complex design elements and use color to maintain site integrity.

(e) **Parking.** Parking lots should not be large and expansive as they create surface water and snow removal problems. Use natural topography as a guide for designing parking lot edges. Boulders, contours, and vegetation are all

elements to consider to achieve a harmonious transition. Keep ground alteration to a minimum.

(f) **People Flow.** Access roads, paths, and steps provide important transitions and require design to harmonize with the entire development. Surfaces should be compact and of either gravel, cinder, or asphalt. Edging is an important consideration such as the use of wood or rocks.

c. **Tourist Gold Panning Businesses**

(1) **Location and Number of Businesses Allowed.** Several individuals have expressed interest in developing tourist gold-panning businesses. This type of business is particularly compatible with the mining character of the management unit and would enhance the tourism potential of the area. To prevent a proliferation of businesses and a sense of the privatization of the scenic road corridor along the Little Susitna River and Willow Creek, the number of gold-panning businesses will be limited to two with facilities, by lease, on public land, exclusive of the alpine ski resort/four-season resort leasehold.

[THE NUMBER OF BUSINESSES TO BE ALLOWED ARE:

WEST SIDE OF PASS (WILLOW CREEK)

-ONE WITH FACILITIES, BY LEASE

EAST OF PASS (LITTLE SUSITNA OR LOWER FISHHOOK)

-ONE WITH FACILITIES INSIDE OF INTENSIVE RECREATION NODE, OR BETWEEN FISHHOOK CREEK AND MP 14 AT A SITE WHICH CAN BE SCREENED FROM VIEW OF THE ROAD.

IDENTIFY, WITH SIGNS, AT LEAST ONE UNSTAKED AREA ALONG THE LITTLE SUSITNA RIVER WHERE GENERAL PUBLIC GOLD PANNING MAY OCCUR.

THERE WILL BE A RE-EVALUATION IN FOUR YEARS TO SEE IF THIS IS AN ADEQUATE NUMBER TO MEET TOURISM AND LOCAL DEMAND AND TO ASSESS THE AFFECTS OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND OTHER USES OF THE AREA.]

Tourist oriented gold-panning businesses are prohibited on [OTHER] streams other than Willow Creek or the Little Susitna. (See Chapter Four, Little Susitna, Willow/Craigie Creek, and Baldy North/Lucky Shot Ridge Subunits for location details.)

(2) **Surface Use Authorization Required.** The DNR policy regarding recreational mining is that it is not a subsurface use under State Mining Law (see Guideline 3 on page 138). A party proposing to conduct recreational mining beyond the scope of generally permitted activities, must procure a permit or lease from the Division of Land

and Water Management. As a surface use no mining claim is necessary to conduct recreational mining activities. However, if the location proposed by the applicant is on a claim and the applicant is not the claimholder, an agreement with the claimholder must be reached prior to receiving a lease from the Division of Land and Water Management. The surface authorization will require concurrence by the Division of Mining prior to issuance by the Division of Land and Water Management to ensure that the surface use involves a minimal conflict with the subsurface. If the area applied for is not subject to a mining claim or lease, the Division of Mining will review as on other proposed surface applications. Holding a mining claim does not give that locator a preference right for a surface lease or permit. It must be done on a competitive basis.

(3) **Surface Lease Term and Renewal Conditions.** After the plan is adopted, formal proposals for development will be solicited and evaluated. Surface leases will be issued for a five-year term with a possible five-year renewal if development occurs in accordance with lease stipulations and conditions.

(4) **Criteria for Awarding Leases.** Surface leases will be issued to operators deemed best able to serve the public with the most return to the state. Information potential developers must provide in their applications include, but is not limited to:

- . Estimated fees to be charged to users.
- . Design proposal for all surface alterations and improvements. (This includes parking and signs.)
- . Location of sanitary facilities (subject to DEC approval).
- . Method of water supply.
- . Public safety.
- . A development plan outlining how guidelines given under Guideline 2, Commercial Development, will be met.
- . Description of marketing plan.
- . Ability to operate compatibly with other surface uses such as the proposed alpine ski area or commercial mining.

(5) **Type of Facilities Allowed.** Facilities which may be authorized by lease on state land for gold panning include an access road, parking, a rustic business sign near the Hatcher Pass Road (but outside of the right-of-way), a shelter for picnicking, storage or souvenir sales, and sluice boxes. Prohibited developments include a lodge, overnight camping facilities, and a bar or restaurant. If facilities are not proposed, the operation could be authorized by permit rather than by a lease and the criteria would be scaled back as appropriate to the level of the proposed operation.

(6) **Stream Buffer.** Within the 200-foot stream buffer only actual mining apparatus, trails, or a picnic shelter may be established. Vegetation removal will be minimal except for small site clearing as preapproved in the development plan by DNR in consultation with ADF&G.

d. **Coordination Between Public and Private Sectors.** Private commercial development on non-state land will be encouraged to follow the same guidelines as are required above

for public facilities. Opportunities for coordination between developers and resource managers will be encouraged. Considerations prior to facility construction on private lands include facility location, size, design, character, and operation. Considerations for private use of public lands include off-site parking, signs, and trails. Cooperation between private and public facility developers can provide the opportunity for aesthetic unity throughout the area and the development of high quality recreational opportunities.

3. RECREATIONAL GOLDPANNING

Recreational mining is the use of state resources for the purposes of attempted or successful extraction of placer gold primarily for the purpose of enjoyment, pleasure, and experience rather than for the purposes of profitable extraction for resale or use. It does not require that the participant have exclusive rights to the minerals through a mining claim. As such, recreational mining is not mining or a subsurface use under State Mining Law. It is a surface use which falls into the generally permitted category of land use (11 AAC 96 and the Division of Land and Water Management Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 5122, Sections 1.2-1.4).

Recreational mining must occur either in unstaked areas or by permission of the claimholder. [AT LEAST ONE AREA ALONG THE LITTLE SUSITNA RIVER, WHICH HAS BEEN CLOSED TO NEW MINERAL ENTRY BY ACTION OF THE LEGISLATURE AND WHERE THERE ARE NO VALID, EXISTING CLAIMS, WILL BE IDENTIFIED WITH SIGNS AS AN OPEN, FREE PUBLIC PANNING AREA. BECAUSE THERE ARE NUMEROUS MINING CLAIMS ALONG MANY OF THE STREAMS, THIS WILL CLEARLY IDENTIFY FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC AN AREA WHICH IS OPEN TO RECREATIONAL USE.]3.

4. PUBLIC SAFETY

a. **Discharge of Firearms.** [DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS WILL BE PROHIBITED FOR PUBLIC SAFETY REASONS IN ADMINISTRATIVELY DESIGNATED CAMPGROUNDS, PICNIC AREAS, DEVELOPED TRAILHEADS AND OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES.] See Chapter 3, Section IX., Miscellaneous Guidelines, Public Safety for policies on discharge of firearms.

b. **No Facilities in Hazard Areas.** Recreation facilities will not be constructed in high avalanche (summer-use only parking or viewing areas are exceptions to this) or flood hazard areas.

c. **Trails in Avalanche Areas.** Winter trails will not be established or maintained in high avalanche hazard areas unless no feasible alternative exists. Where trails are maintained or use is occurring in avalanche hazard areas, warning signs will be placed in strategic locations.

d. **Use of Road Corridor by Off-Road Vehicles.** See Transportation and Access section, page 158.

5. PUBLIC USE CABINS

a. **Location Criteria.** Public use cabins may be used to provide the public with recreational opportunities in the Hatcher Pass area, funding permitting. Cabins will be located several miles away from the road system to minimize vandalism. They should be sited in visually unobtrusive locations and screened by trees or contour features. They will not be located in moose concentration areas, within 200 feet of major streams, in avalanche hazard areas or in intensive use areas. (Suggested locations are shown on Map 12.) On-site analysis by DNR will be required prior to construction. ADF&G will be consulted prior to construction approval by the Division of Land and Water Management. The number of cabins shown on the map approximate the number and density allowed. Public interest in cabins in the management unit was mixed: a limited number was preferred by a majority of users, although many people preferred no cabins. This is a low priority implementation item. If the cabins create management problems, the state maintains the option to remove them.

b. **Existing Unauthorized Cabins.** Existing unauthorized cabins in these areas will be evaluated by the Division of Land and Water Management for possible conversion to public-use cabins.

c. **Management.** DNR will only manage public use cabins if there are adequate funds available to construct new cabins or upgrade trespass cabins, as well as maintain and operate the facilities. Agreements may be made with recreational groups for construction, maintenance, and operation of public cabins. Groups who construct cabins under such an agreement may reserve the cabin at certain times for exclusive use of the group. Exclusive use times will be specified in the agreement with DLWM. However, such groups will not have exclusive year-round use.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RECREATION (page 140, original plan)

a. **Management of [EAST-SIDE] Recreation.** Because of the intensive recreational use occurring on the east side of the Pass, the Division of Land and Water Management and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will share management responsibility. The two divisions will spell out in a cooperative management agreement the dual management roles to be followed in the Hatcher Pass Public Use Area and for the rest of the subunits included in a special use area [EAST SIDE OF THE PASS (INDEPENDENCE, ARCHANGEL, LITTLE SUSITNA, AND GOVERNMENT PEAK SUBUNITS).] The basic management responsibilities for each division are listed below:

Div. of Land & Water Management

Responsible for issuing land uses leases or permits; management of surface use on mining claims, grazing, gravel extraction; for establishing special use areas; preparing cooperative management agreements; and overseeing implementation of the plan

Coordinate with Department of Transportation and Public Facilities in road improvement projects, gravel site management, right-of-way issues, and related items

Div. of Parks and Outdoor Recreation

Manage people-use of the area including off-road vehicles, littering, and disturbance of natural materials, and manage for greater public safety

Design, construct, and manage recreation facilities, including trailheads, campgrounds, interpretive devices

Provide information to public on uses, natural and human history interpretation, and public safety

Promulgate and enforce regulations as appropriate to use of the area

Permitting of fly-in skiing

The Division of Land and Water Management and the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation will jointly review all land use proposals on the east side of the Pass.

b. **Recreation Sites.** The proposed campgrounds and picnic areas, Hatcher Pass Recreation Site, and the addition to Independence Mine State Historic Park will be managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation as a State Recreation Site under an interagency land management agreement with the Division of Land and Water Management.

c. **Self-Enforcement.** Self-enforcement of special use designations by user groups will be encouraged through public participation in the planning process, through public education, signs and user involvement in trail siting, construction, repair, and maintenance.

d. **Borough Involvement.** The recreational needs of local communities should, in part, be provided for by the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Department of Natural Resources will work with the Matanuska-Susitna Borough to ensure that the demand for recreational opportunities is met on either state, borough, or other land where appropriate. The borough is encouraged to consult with DNR and ADF&G prior to the development or dedication of a recreational area within or adjacent to the Hatcher Pass Management Unit.

e. **Recreation Opportunity Spectrum.** Recreation opportunity spectrum, as applied in this plan, is a conceptual framework that is intended to provide land managers guidance as to what level of recreational development is appropriate within each subunit. This system, which has been adopted from the U.S. Forest Service, helps clarify the relationships between recreational settings, activities, and experiences. Recreation opportunity spectrum

recognizes that opportunities sought by recreationists range from easily accessible, highly developed areas to wilderness experiences.

Based on extensive public involvement, the desired recreational setting for each of the subunits and the level of acceptable changes has been described in Chapter 4 guidelines. Judgements of acceptability of changes in the recreational setting (such as increased vegetation alteration) require not only the viewpoints of managers and researchers but of citizens as well. Thus, continued citizen involvement in decisions about recreational developments will provide valuable feedback to the land manager.

f. **Coordinated Funding.** Consider a coordinated budget approach between the Division of Land and Water Management, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, and the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities to meet public facility, safety, maintenance, and management operations needs.

g. **Regulations.** The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Division of Land and Water Management shall write regulations for management of the Hatcher Pass Special Use Area.

7. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

a. **Interpretative Signs and Guidebook.** DNR will install an interpretative sign system along the roadway which identifies natural features, mining history, wildlife viewing opportunities, and provides avalanche safety information. DNR will also produce an accompanying Guidebook to Hatcher Pass. The purpose is to enhance visitor enjoyment, to educate the public about the resources and legal access, and to provide an explanation of what is allowed and not allowed by the public in active mining sites.

b. **Outdoor Education.** Continued use of the Hatcher Pass area for a variety of outdoor education is encouraged. Floral diversity, wildlife, geology, mining, skiing, mountaineering, rock climbing, and road-access for weekend wilderness travel (both winter and summer) are a few of many outdoor education activities which occur at the present time. Future classes could be conducted on range use by cattle and wildlife.

c. **Authorization Generally Not Required.** The type of outdoor activities education listed in Item b above generally does not require a permit or lease if the use is temporary and does not require structures, roads or signs, or blocking of general public use.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

The public has identified maintenance of environmental quality as one of the most important goals for the management area. Because most of the area is in the alpine vegetation zone, which is easily damaged by heavy use, management techniques such as providing hardened trails to direct use or erosion control may be required in selected areas. DNR should establish a program to annually monitor the effects of off-road vehicle (ORV) and hiking use on soils and vegetation in key popular use areas such as Reed Lakes, Summit Lake, Peters-Purchases trail to

Willow Mountain, and the Willow Mountain lowlands trail. Once problems are identified, rehabilitation or mitigation measures will be undertaken as funding and/or private sector cooperation is available.

9. PROTECTION OF FLOWER DIVERSITY

Flowers and plants may not be removed on the east side of the Pass, within Summit Lake State Recreation Site or along the Hatcher Pass Road corridor on the west side of the Pass for a distance of 100 yards on either side of the road. The only exception will be for scientific purposes under permit. This guideline does not apply to berry picking.

[REPORTS FROM A NATURALIST AND OTHER CITIZENS OF HIGHGRADING OF SELECT SPECIES, SUCH AS ORCHIDS AND CHOCOLATE LILIES POINT TO WHAT COULD BECOME A PROBLEMS OF LOSS OF SPECIES DIVERSITY IN THE ACCESSIBLE ALPINE AND SUBALPINE AREA ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE PASS.

AS PART OF THE DIVISION OF PARK'S MANAGEMENT OF RECREATIONAL USE OF THE PASS, FLOWERS MAY BE DUG UP ON A PERMIT BASIS ONLY. THERE WILL BE NO RESTRICTIONS WEST OF THE PASS, EXCEPT THAT COMMERCIAL USE OF PLANTS REQUIRES A PERMIT AS IT DOES ON ALL STATE LANDS.]

10. UNIQUE ECOSYSTEM RESOURCES

The management unit provides many opportunities for outdoor education and scientific study, and sites may be appropriate for designation as ecological reserves for the transitional flora, diversity of flowers, interesting and accessible geologic features (rock glaciers, rock avalanches, slab releases), and unique-to-the-region tundra nesting birds. These sites, once identified, are to remain natural and be used for education and research. Interagency review will be required prior to establishment of ecological reserve site(s).

11. TRAIL MANAGEMENT (See Transportation and Access, page 159.)

12. ESTABLISHMENT OF NON-MOTORIZED USE AREAS

Pursuant to 11 AAC 96.010(2) and 11 AAC 96.010(3)(b) of the Miscellaneous Land Use Regulations, the following areas are to be established as special use areas where non-motorized use is allowed only under specified conditions (see Chapter IV for details):

- Upper Little Susitna Valley
- Reed Valley Lakes
- Independence Mine State Historic Park addition
- Hatcher Pass/Summit Lake Recreation Site
- Bald Mountain habitat area

Other special use areas may be created to implement the off-road vehicle management policies (see page 160-162) and subunit guidelines for recreational use.

13. POLICY FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF A HIGH PEAKS SPECIAL USE AREA ADJACENT TO PLAN AREA

Due to strong public support for establishing special management of motorized use in the high peaks area adjacent to the northeast portion of the management unit, the Division of Land and Water Management agrees to consider a request for establishment of a special use area wherein allowed motorized use would be specified and authorized by a permit. This action would be separate from this plan since the area under consideration is outside the plan boundary. This request should be submitted in writing, and it is recommended that those making the request include available user data and work out a compromise where certain area(s) would be authorized for fly-in use. This area does not need to be included within the plan boundary to create a special use area. (See Appendix XI for background information.)

14. [FLY-IN SKIING] AIRCRAFT LANDINGS (page 143, original plan)

[DNR RECOGNIZES THAT BOTH WALK-IN AND FLY-IN SKIING ARE POPULAR USES. AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE, SOME LIMITATIONS MAY HAVE TO BE PLACED ON THE LEVEL OF FLY-IN USE IF ALL USES KEEP ACCELERATING AS ANTICIPATED. HOWEVER, OUTSIDE THE DESIGNATED NON-MOTORIZED AREAS, NO SUCH RESTRICTIONS ARE PLANNED IN THE NEAR TERM. PERMITS MAY BE REQUIRED, HOWEVER, FOR COMMERCIAL HELICOPTER OR FLY-IN SKIING TO ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY AND REDUCE POTENTIAL LIABILITY CLAIMS AGAINST THE STATE].

a. Aircraft Landings in Archangel and Government Peak Subunits. In Archangel and Government Peak Subunits, limit the landing of aircraft used for commercial recreation to designated natural landing sites. The use of aircraft on the east side of Hatcher Pass is likely to increase as a result of the resort. The purpose of this restriction is to preserve opportunities for diverse recreational experience, consolidate impacts, contain management costs, and allow for efficient monitoring of cumulative impacts.

DNR will designate landing sites following adoption of the plan in consultation with an interagency work group and interested members of the Citizen's Advisory Committee. Agency participants should include but not necessarily be limited to the Division of Land and Water, the Division of Parks, the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Department of Transportation. Local helicopter pilots should also be consulted. Public notice of the intent to designate sites will be given. Snowbird Glacier will probably be one of the designated landing sites.

b. Impact From Aircraft Use. DNR will monitor the effects of the landing of aircraft on wildlife, alpine vegetation, and other recreational uses and may modify its management of designated landing sites accordingly.

c. **Flight Corridors, East Side of Hatcher Pass.** Aircraft flying over the east side of the Pass below 1,500 feet will be encouraged to use a flight corridor that avoids the Little Susitna, Reed Lakes, and Independence subunits and other areas that may be designated as off limits for most forms of motorized use.

d. **Arkose Ridge heliskiing.** Evaluate heliskiing opportunities on the west end of Arkose Ridge near Delia Creek (in the vicinity of Delia Creek within sections 1 and 12, T19 N, R1E and sections 6 and 7, T19N, R2E). If the potential is good, allow limited helicopter landings within the area shown as D on Amendment Map 6. The pick-up point is to be located to minimize impacts on the existing nonmotorized zone. (Area D is primarily within the Little Susitna Subunit; part of it is also within Government Peak Subunit A.)